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Javits Debate

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I appreciate the comments which the distinguished Senator from New York has just made. I am sorry I have not been able to follow the full content of his speech, because—as always—I know he makes a distinct contribution.

But I would say that while Communist China is a menacing shadow over all of southeast Asia—and perhaps we could say over south Asia, as well, in view of the aggressive tactics of Communist China some months ago against India—it is my belief that so far as Hanoi—North Vietnam—is concerned, based on the ancient enmity of the Vietnamese people toward China, the relationship between Hanoi and the Soviet Union may well be closer and may prove to be a mitigating factor.

I would point out that so far as General de Gaulle is concerned, to the best of my knowledge he did not indicate that Communist China should be brought into consideration in connection with all of old Indochina, but that his remarks diverged in two directions. One was recognition of Peiping, which I think was a tragic mistake, as I said yesterday; and in that respect I join in the remarks made by the Senator from Minnesota [Mr. HUMPHREY], the Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DODD], the Senator from Ohio [Mr. LAUSCHE], and others in deploring that act. Aside from what the French did on their own responsibility in that respect, and in connection with a government which is acting within those bounds, I was sorry to note that the Government of Formosa broke relations with General de Gaulle, although I understand that, in effect, that was forced by Paris, in an attempt to get away from continued French recognition of Formosa and to make possible French recognition of Peiping. That is an unfortunate situation; and I think the Nationalists by their action took President de Gaulle out of a hole in which he had inadvertently placed himself.

So far as the other divergent view—Indochina—is concerned, I think General de Gaulle, who is a man of great historic perspective, and quite often offers ideas which at least are worth consideration—whether they prove to be right or wrong, only time will tell, is aware of a deepening difficulty in that area; and certainly France, based on 80 years of experience in Laos, Cambodia, and the two Vietnams, is in a position to speak with some degree of authority.

It is true that the United States has 15,500 troops there at the present time, as "advisers." We are faced with a number of choices. We can go ahead and can increase our military commitment and can increase our resource expenditures and can carry the war to North Vietnam, and maybe into Communist China, itself, and be prepared to pay the consequences. I do not think that is the motive behind American thinking. I hope it is not.

Or we can withdraw. I think that would be just as bad a mistake, because then South Vietnam and the rest of southeast Asia would be placed at the mercy of elements connected with the Communist movement.

There may be a third alternative, and it may be the suggestion advanced by De Gaulle—which may be a good one or may be a bad one; at the moment, no one can tell. But if any stability is to be brought to South Vietnam, it is not going to be done on the basis of coup after coup after coup.

Personally, I deplore what happened to the late President Ngo Diem Dinh, who, in spite of all his faults, I thought was a good man, and who did maintain a degree of civilian control over that government. If he had his way, I think he might in time have achieved a degree of stability which would have redounded to the benefit of his country.

But if we go back to the Geneva Agreement of 1954, to which we were not signatories, we recall that that agreement partitioned Vietnam at the 17th parallel, and also contained a provision that within 2 years thereafter there would be elections, in both North Vietnam and and South Vietnam, as to what the future of the country would be.

I do not endorse the election proposal in that Geneva Agreement; but, after all, we did agree—at least, by association—to a line of demarcation of the 17th parallel.

I believe that the stability of South Vietnam must be maintained; and if, for example, there is some way, based on De Gaulle's suggestion, and apart from any consideration of Peiping and recognition of Communist China, that this stability could be given a chance to enhance itself, and if Vietnam could become a more stable nation, then I think the idea, if not the proposal, is at least worth considering.

I repeat that it may be a good idea; it may be a bad idea; it may have some value; it may be worthless. But we have to have something to contrast with the choice between going all the way in or all the way out; and one of the ideas advanced in that area is such a factor as an international patrol which would guarantee a true neutrality and a true territorial integrity which would stop the flow of arms along the Ho Chi Minh trail—or by sea, which is the way they seem to be coming in at the present time—that stability perhaps to be maintained by American troops who are there, and or perhaps by others of international agencies, so that there would be a type of neutrality based on guarantees—not on words, proposals, or promises.

So I think these statements should be made—even though they have taken a little longer than I anticipated when I asked the distinguished Senator from New York to yield—in order to indicate that a proposal coming from a quarter with which we have had differences, but with which we are still, on the whole, friendly, should not be treated casually, should not be tossed out the window; but if such an idea has merit, it should be given some consideration; and if, after study, we find that it has no merit, then it should be tossed aside.

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, no one respects the majority leader more than I do. I have said that many times, and I am sure he knows that.

I rose today only to make clear what I think needs to be made clear even if that does involve a difference with the majority leader.

What I thought needed to be made clear was that the struggle which we are helping to wage in South Vietnam is understandable to the American people, and that they are determined to wage it, and that they will not stop waging it until they see a much better solution than De Gaulle's idea that he will "take care of it", and just "leave it to him." After all, he "took care of it" at Dien Bien Phu, too.

Mr. MANSFIELD. No; he did not, because he was not in power at the time.

Mr. JAVITS. I am speaking about France.

Mr. MANSFIELD. But on the basis of what the distinguished Senator from New York has said, I hope he will keep in mind the other two alternatives—because he is making a distinct contribution, and we have remained silent too long on this subject.

It is all very well for the people to talk about Panama and Cyprus and the difficulties there; but perhaps the most difficult problem at the present time is the one in southeast Asia. On that basis and on the basis of the intelligence the Senator from New York always displays, I think his suggestions will be a service to the country, which is displaying great interest in this most difficult and vexatious problem.

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, I am most grateful to the majority leader.

I point out that the minute we begin to talk about neutralization and neutralism, the backbone and the spirit could go out of the action which is being taken in this struggle. No one would intend that or desire it to happen, but such things do happen.

Therefore, I thought it important to emphasize—and to speak these words in the same forum—the determination of the American people, as I view it, to carry on the struggle in Vietnam until there is a far more viable solution.

Mr. President, let us remember that our forces are in South Korea, and have been there for 14 years; that South Korea has not been neutralized; but that, nonetheless, the confrontation between ourselves and the Communist Chinese in South Korea has been a very restraining influence upon the Communist Chinese, and will continue to be for a very long time to come.

Let us remember also in respect of Communist China that her incursion against India, her deals with Pakistan, the taking of Tibet, and her assaults, which for the moment have ceased, on Taiwan, certainly are not reassuring in terms of the intentions of Communist China, which I believe are very clear—to dominate the whole of the Asian Continent.

With all due respect to the Senator from Montana, I believe he assumes far too much when he assumes that the relations between Ho Chi Minh and Moscow are better than the relations between Ho Chi Minh and Mao Tse-tung. I believe there are many proverbs, both Eastern and Western, to the effect that the tiger at the door is much more important than the tiger in the forest.

It is inconceivable to me, and to most Americans, that Ho Chi Minh could be carrying on this guerrilla war throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia and into Laos without the friendship, support, and alliance of the Communist Chinese, who are on his doorstep, and without whom he could not survive for 20 minutes.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. If the Senator will go back over his history, he will recall that the enmity between Vietnam, and the Chinese to the north goes back well over 1,000 years. Much of Vietnam, and almost all of southeast Asia, were either tributary to or vassal kingdoms of the Chinese emperors.

There is an inherent fear on the part of all Vietnamese because of the nearness of China; and there is, I believe, testimony to the effect that even in recent weeks there have been exchanges of missions between Moscow and Hanoi by means of which North Vietnamese groups went to Moscow for the purpose of seeking assistance from the Soviet Union.

The Senator will recall that when the activities in Laos were being carried on by the Pathet Lao, it was not the Communist Chinese who were sending down the supplies by sea from Vladivostok and elsewhere on the Siberian coast, but it was the Soviet Union which was sending down those supplies to Haiphong, the port for Hanoi, and from there sent overland into Laos and were taken over by the Pathet Lao.

There have been no indications, I admit, that in recent months there have been any Soviet airlifts or Soviet sea trips from Vladivostok or any other ports to Hanoi. But I still think that basically the friendship is toward Moscow, and basically the enmity on the part of the Vietnamese, North and South, is still directed toward Peiping.

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, I would not wish to be distracted from the main scene by what is a sideshow. We all know that the Poles and the Finns hate the Russians, too. Nevertheless, those people do the bidding of the Russians because they have no other choice. Be that as it may, the end point is as follows: If North Vietnam should be able to overrun South Vietnam, and thus destroy the whole position in south and southeast Asia, she would be doing an inestimable service to Communist China. That is all I am speaking about.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Who has indicated that North Vietnam would seek to overrun South Vietnam? Who has brought out any indication that General Giap, an able soldier, has ever used his troops on that basis to penetrate into North Vietnam? It may be that elements of the North Vietnamese Army have penetrated into South Vietnam. I do not know.

But south of Saigon, in the Mekong Delta, there are a number of Communist Vietcong elements which do not seem to be decreasing in number, and which have been most effective in fighting the Vietnamese Army in that particular area. Of course, circumstances—geography and terrain—are on their side, as was the case in the Red River Delta outside of Hanoi when the French were in control and tried to subjugate that area. They were unsuccessful.

The point is as follows: To the best of my knowledge, only irregular elements have been coming into South Vietnam. Perhaps certain elements of the North Vietnamese Army have also come in. Again, I do not know for certain the facts in this matter.

Mr. JAVITS. The Senator from New York has certainly not charged that which he knows nothing about as to the regular elements of the North Vietnamese Army. But it is very clear—and upon this point the Senator from New York has received ample confirmation—that the lines of supply and the base of support for what is going on in South Vietnam are in North Vietnam.

When things really became hot, as they did at one time in the northern provinces, the Communist elements moved over into North Vietman for rest, reequipment, and supply. Without that base, the whole operation of the Communists in South Vietnam would be untenable. We well know Communist technique in these wars of so-called national liberation which are fought in precisely that way. We also know that if the Communists should take over in South Vietnam, it would be as effective, from the point of view of the free world, in that there would be another Communist state which would play freely with North Vietnam and Communist China. That is the only point I am making.

I do not desire to be diverted from my main point. I believe the American people support what is being done in South Vietnam. I do not believe that the American people are in any mood to back away from it. If they are, they should not be, because though we are suffering casualties and running grave risks, the alternatives are far more dire. Let us remember that even a great nation must suffer casualties currently in order to avoid even greater casualties later. The present position in south and southeast Asia—representing still a rampart against the absolutely uncontrolled expansion of Communist China, which preaches to all its people that its ultimate aim is the destruction not only of the free world, but specifically the United States of America and its people—it seems to me is only insurance against a future which seems so foreboding in terms of the intentions at the moment which Communist China declared and reiterated for so very long.

Mr. GRUENING. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. Not yet. I shall yield in a moment. My only purpose in speaking is that on the one hand we are told that we should have a completely open

mind about this area, that we should consider President de Gaulle's suggestions—and I assume those of anyone else—and also that we should be searching for new methods, new techniques, and new ways of dealing with the problem. I believe it is also important to reiterate our fortitude and determination to stay in South Vietnam and do the job, though it is costly and difficult. We should reiterate our determination to try to find a viable, freely elected government for South Vietnam, pursuing very much the same policy that we have pursued, notwithstanding reverses, in South Korea, and for the very same reasons. I merely reiterate that. I believe it is extremely important. I do not think there should be any sapping or lessening of the morale of the American people, nor do I believe that the Pentagon should be doubtful of the fortitude of the American people, or that there must be a promise that we will not pull out or they will not stick it out. That was the mistake made after World War II that was so costly to us in terms of the rise of the Communist power in Europe. It resulted in nothing but losses; and we are still licking our wounds today. We do not wish to repeat that experience in southeast Asia.

It is not necessary to have a repetition of the debate about morale, as we did with General MacArthur. It is not necessary for a determination that we must wipe out the northern base for this operation in South Vietnam. Sufficient unto the day is the work thereof.

All that must be reiterated now is that we know what we are doing. We will continue to do it. It is worth doing. No one in the Pentagon or in the Senate need have the "jitters" about it. It is high time that some people understand that the American people are adults. They understand that in order to make an omelet, some eggs must be broken.

Mr. GRUENING. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. Not yet. A little later.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I should first like to finish my thought.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The Senator has used a word which I believe needs correction.

Mr. JAVITS. If the Senator would permit me to finish, I should be glad to withdraw the word "jitters."

Mr. MANSFIELD. Very well.

Mr. JAVITS. I wish to speak in the affirmative. I love the majority leader too much to be critical. I mean that in every way. I wish to speak only in the affirmative. I think there must be cojoined with whatever he has said and whatever Secretary McNamara has said about the fact that we will bring people back from Vietnam a reiteration of the American determination to do what we are doing, even though it involves losses, to persist in doing what we are doing, to undertake our commitment and to carry it through, because it is worthwhile, and because the alternatives are greater losses, both in national terms and in terms of killed and wounded and the expenditure of treasure.

That is all that needs to be said about it. If we have both understandings, certainly the United States should always keep an open mind. I am sure the majority leader, and others, as well as I, am for our experts in the State Department and others using their ingenuity to see if they cannot come forward with a better line of policy. I have heard people raise some questions, but I think we are convinced that what we are doing is necessary and that no pullout is necessary in order to placate a feeling by some American people that we are doing the wrong thing. On the contrary, it is the right thing, and I think we must continue to do it in the national interest and in the interest of the American people.

Mr. GRUENING. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. GRUENING. I understand the Senator made a comparison of the United States long sojourn of 14 years in South Korea with the situation in South Vietnam. Has the Senator noted the marked difference in the attitude of the South Koreans from that of the South Vietnamese? The South Koreans were opposed to the Communists. They fought bravely and incurred many losses. The United States went in there to help those who wanted to help themselves. There seems to be a lack of will on the part of the South Vietnamese to wage a fight against the Communists. It contrasts with the will to fight of the Koreans. That is the basis of our difficulty in Vietnam. The Vietnamese show no great enthusiasm for being saved. That is why our performance there has not been as successful as it should have been. Will the Senator comment on that point?

Mr. JAVITS. Yes. On the first point, I would prefer not to say that the South Vietnamese have not been willing to fight. On occasion they have shown a great intrepidity and have sustained great losses, both civilian and military. It seems to me the problem has been one of government stability and the question of whether the government has had the interests of the people at heart, which has been a blow to morale. Nevertheless, I would not try to draw a precise comparison between the South Koreans and the South Vietnamese.

I was only pointing out that we have had military programs in a dangerous spot for a long period of time, and, notwithstanding the dangers and losses, the policy has paid off, because the Communist forces have been restrained in that area of the world for a very considerable time. I was only making the analogy that we cannot look at these problems in terms of short swings. We must take the longer swings into consideration. That was the only comparison I was making.

Mr. GRUENING. Mr. President, will the Senator yield further?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. GRUENING. Does the Senator think that if our action in South Vietnam is not more successful than it appears to have been, we should go in there with greater strength, more manpower, and more equipment and win the war for the South Vietnamese?

Mr. JAVITS. I think I have made my views on that point very clear—that we ought to continue doing what we are doing. I am not sitting in the Pentagon and judging the strategic and tactical necessities. If I could write a one-line directive, I think it would be that we should do what we are doing. We should continue with our "instruction" in that area, and support it with highly technical assistance, and also incur the danger which is involved, which is a help to the morale of the Vietnamese, and do our utmost to bring about a freely elected government there.

I cannot say to the Senator that I would send in a new group of instructors, or take out an old group, or increase the number from 15,500 to 16,500, or reduce it to 14,500. I do not know. That is why I have said we should continue to do what we have been doing; that the effort is worthwhile, and that the American people are backing it up, or should be; and that we should determine to cojoin our ideas, as was done in the debate engaged in yesterday, in looking at De Gaulle's neutralist ideas, and thinking of other ways to deal with the problems.

I had feared that unless our ideas were cojoined, the result might be to lead people to feel that the United States was looking for a way out.

Mr. GRUENING. Mr. President, will the Senator yield further?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. GRUENING. I agree with the Senator that there should be an open mind, but I do not think anyone can state with any degree of assurance that our policy and performance in Vietnam to date have been successful. We have been in there for a long time and we have lost substantially, both in American lives, and in southeast Asia over four billion dollars in money. We are now spending at the rate of a million dollars a day. Will the Senator admit that if this situation continues much further without success, we should have an alternative? Does the Senator think that if we continue in this way we should go into that area with larger forces and see if we can win the war, instead of having a stalemate, which would go on and on with loss of American lives and substance?

Mr. JAVITS. As to the increase in forces, I think I have answered that point by saying I would continue to do what we have been doing. At least we have outlined an objective and have learned what is required to carry out that objective.

With respect to the success or lack of it, I certainly am no apologist for the administration. However, South Vietnam has not been taken over by the Communists. If that took place, it would be a disastrous rout for us. That has not happened. I do not want it to happen.

I would certainly rather have that situation than the alternative. I am sure that the Senator from Montana, as well as I, and the rest of us, would want to guard against it. That is the purpose of

my making this statement. When one gives tongue to an idea, one can interest others in it, and perhaps arrive at a consensus, just as we should look at all problems with fairness, with open eyes, and try to decide on our own. But that is no "flap" for pulling out of Vietnam because certain people have determined that we should not pursue what we have been doing. That is all I have been trying to say today.

Mr. GRUENING. I thank the Senator.

Mr. JAVITS. I thank the Senator, and also the majority leader, for their kind contributions.

Mr. PROUTY. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. PROUTY. The Senator from New York has rendered a signal service to the country by a logical analysis of the situation in South Vietnam. What really concerns the top military personnel in the Pentagon is the fact that measures are not being taken which would enable them to win the war with Vietnam. I think that concerns our officials. I commend the Senator from New York.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The discussion which has taken place this afternoon has broken a long silence on affairs in Vietnam. The distinguished Senator from New York has performed a service.

I know he agrees with me when I say the answer is not an increase in forces or resources, to carry the war into North Vietnam or, for that matter, possibly into Communist China itself. I know he agrees with me that the answer is not a withdrawal of the American forces in South Vietnam at the present time. But if he agrees with me in those two respects, I believe we should keep an open mind to consider other possibilities. While we may disagree with a man of the stature of General de Gaulle from time to time—and I do, most certainly—nevertheless, I have a great respect for him because I believe he is doing for his country that which France, by and large, wishes him to do. When he does these things, he sometimes comes into disagreement with his allies; but that is his responsibility, just as what we do is our responsibility.

The mere fact that he advanced the idea covering the old associated states of French Indochina does not necessarily mean that our reaction should be to treat it in a casual way or to pay no attention to it.

I believe an open mind is a good thing. I believe discussions concerning a most difficult part of the world in which we are heavily involved are worthwhile. I believe that so far as Vietnam is concerned, it is just as important as Cuba, even though one is 10,000 miles away and the other is only 90 miles from our shores.

I point out that late news stories are to the effect that no more dependents would go to Guantanamo, and that those who are there would be brought home when their regular tours of duty were over, if not before. Perhaps we have too many dependents in South Vietnam. Perhaps a conflict of interest exists because of this fact. But I point out, if my understanding is correct, that what we have sent to South Vietnam are probably the best we have in the way of fighting men, that they are the elite of the various services, and that they all volunteered for that hazardous duty. But there is no reason why discussion should not occur. There is no reason why debate and differences on the floor of the Senate should not be stated because ways and means will have to be found not only in South Vietnam, but elsewhere throughout the world, to face the changes which occur and to try to do our best as the leader of the free world, as the Nation charged with the primary responsibility, in my opinion, in too many areas of the world, to find different answers and to face different changes in different times.

Mr. JAVITS. As to my answers in agreement or disagreement with respect to the basic posture of the Senator from Montana, I have already expressed my views in my address, and I shall let those answers stand as answers to those questions.

As to General de Gaulle, I too, have great respect for him. He was a great hero during the war. He is a great hero to his people. I deeply believe, however, that General de Gaulle could not be doing what he is doing for France unless we were around to do what we are doing for the free world, and that so long as this is a rather free ride, we had better be wary of how we operate in taking these grand suggestions.

That is the only thing I stressed in my speech—that we had better not be distracted from persevering in the basic policy in relation to the free world, and that our people, in my judgment, should support it.

That was the reason for my speaking today. I agree with the Senator from Montana that the airing of this issue is valuable.

I believe that he and I made somewhat similar speeches in regard to Berlin. The Senator from Montana first authored the suggestion with respect to some possible change or consideration of a change in the status of Berlin. He took up the issue in much the same way I am doing today, in order, if possible, to reach a consensus. I believe the Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DODD] participated in this debate, along with many other Senators. The result was a better consciousness in the United States of its policy and determination as to how to pursue it to the best effect.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator from New York yield at that point?

Mr. JAVITS. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. There was a change which resulted in the wall being created between East and West Berlin, instead of a unified Berlin, a Berlin to be the future capital of a unified Germany.

Mr. JAVITS. I do not wish to raise that problem again, but it was my view that the result might have been extremely dangerous to the continued presence in Berlin of the allies. At the time, the Russians could easily have taken over Berlin and made of it the capital of East Germany. In any case, the decision could have gone either way, in my judgment, but I believe that our debate upon the subject or consideration of the subject is helpful to the country, as I hope this one will be.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Speaking of Berlin, this is one area in the world where the U.S. Government is in effect begging the Soviet authorities and the Soviet troops to remain, because we do not wish to displace them by East Germans.

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, that is a subject which I shall be glad to discuss at some other time; but right now I believe we had better keep our eyes fastened on the Vietnamese ball, which is serious enough.

Mr. MANSFIELD. It is always a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to debate and discuss issues, both foreign and domestic, with the distinguished Senator from New York.

Mr. JAVITS. I am grateful to the Senator for those remarks. I am pleased at his reference to me. He knows full well that I deeply feel the same way about him.